

Dear Chair Michiewicz and Chair Cronin,

My name is Matthew Phelan and I live at 193 Dutcher St., Hopedale, Mass. I work for the Mass. Department of Correction and am a Correctional Officer III. As a constituent, I write to express my opposition to Senate Bill 2820. This legislation is detrimental to police and correctional officers who work every day to keep the people of the Commonwealth safe. In 2019 the Criminal Justice System went through reform. That reform took several years to develop. I am dismayed in the hastiness that this bill was passed but I welcome the opportunity to tell you how this bill turns its back the very men and women who serve the public.

Qualified Immunity: Qualified Immunity doesn't protect officers who break the law or violate someone's civil rights. Qualified Immunity protects officers who did not clearly violate stator policy or constitutional rights. The erasure of this would open up the flood gates for frivolous lawsuits causing officers to acquire additional insurance and tying up the justice system causing the Commonwealth millions of dollars to process such frivolous lawsuits.

Less than Lethal Tools: The fact that you want to take away an officer's use of pepper spray, impact weapons and K9 would leave no

other option than to go from, yelling "Stop" to hands on tactics and/or using your firearm. We are all for de-escalation but if you take away these tools the amount of injuries and deaths without a doubt will rise.

Civilian Oversight: While we are held to a higher standard than others in the community, to have an oversight committee made of people who have never worn the uniform, including an ex convicted felon is completely unnecessary and irresponsible. When this oversight board hears testimony where are the officer's rights under our collective bargaining agreement? Where are our rights to due process? What is the appeal process? These are things that have never been heard or explained to me. The need for responsible and qualified individuals on any committee should be first and foremost.

I am asking you to stop and think about the rush to reform police and corrections in such haste. Our officers are some of the best and well-trained officers anywhere. Although, we are not opposed to getting better it should be done with dignity and respect for the men and women who serve the commonwealth. I ask that you think about the police officer you need to keep your streets safe from violence, and don't dismantle proven community policing practices. I would also ask you to think about the Correction

Officer alone in a cell block, surrounded by up to one hundred inmates, not knowing when violence could erupt. I'm asking for your support and ensuring that whatever reform is passed that you do it responsibly. Thank You for your time.

Sincerely,

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